



**Brussels Rural Development Briefings**  
**A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues**

**Briefing session n° 15**  
**From Global Food Crisis to Local Food Insecurity**

***Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009 – 8h30 – 13h00***

**Civil society perspective on the Food Crisis**  
**Stuart Coupe – Practical Action**

***Executive Summary***

In the poorest countries the food insecure are largely micro-scale food producers and livestock rear, who suffer from 'silent' chronic hunger for a few or more months every year, long before the 'food crisis' hit news headlines in 2008.

Sustainable increased production and ability to sell surplus at stable prices would enhance both food availability and affordability (increased income)

The key then is to address these obstacles that can broadly be categorised into political, economic, ecological and technical:

1. **Political:** marginalised farmers, especially women lack power to influence resource allocation and decisions (especially on land, seed policies) by governments, donors and private capital: they are not organised politically or commercially for influence;
2. **Economic:** Laws of supply and demand fail in staple food markets in poor African countries – due to lack of infrastructure, price signals, private entrepreneurs who want to invest in food production;
3. **Ecological:** soil fertility depletion and degradation, dependence on rain, climate change, diminishing biodiversity;
4. **Technical:** Agricultural research benefiting small scale farmers has been neglected by governments, donors and private sector. Research establishment (including CGIARs) are not in tune with the needs and interests of small and micro-scale food producers, radical overhaul needed.

**Solutions:** reverse the neglect of public resources to agriculture in poorest countries. Need to re-focus approach to address economic, ecological and technical obstacles: especially need to change approach in services to farmer-led, bringing together formal research establishments with farmers to develop approaches and technical solutions that address their needs, and the need to mainstream agro-ecological approaches into all poor country extension services given proven success in raising production, conserving soil and water, helping farmers to adapt to climate change, etc.